

Kiner, David

From: Robin Bushong [rbushong@cox.net]
Sent: Monday, February 09, 2009 2:19 PM
To: Kiner, David
Subject: Bill #HB6357 An act of creating the offense of cyber bullying

Dear Mr. Kiner,
 I would like to submit testimony for the hearing on this bill coming up. This is my story:

February 6, 2009

I have recently learned that it is perfectly legal to write anything you want on the internet about anyone, no matter how vile or demeaning, without any worry about criminal consequences. As long as it does not contain anything physically threatening or sexual, your first amendment rights are right there with you.

So imagine my horror yesterday when my 12 year old daughter and I discovered that a very troubled classmate of hers decided to exercise her rights by using my daughter's image as a backdrop for some of the most vulgar slander I have ever heard coming from a 7th grader. All because she doesn't like her.

When I called the Enfield police, they told me they could "feel my pain" but that their hands were tied. There was nothing they could do other than file a report. The school administration went through the proper protocol (after all, the photos were taken in the classroom with one of those handy cell phones that all the 12 years olds seem to need) and followed up with the legal dose of school discipline... Unfortunately, (because of more privacy rules) ,they couldn't quite tell me what that is....

And of course the young girl's parent was completely mortified and offered no defense... I have no idea what consequences will bestow this child once she gets home...

All that's left, it would appear, is cyberspace... the virtual world where imagery and defacing keystrokes find an audience and in which my daughter has been folly for who knows who that was viewing... That is something that she and I will have to deal with on our own...not to mention that the perpetrators "Gaia on Line" webpage was but one stroke away from countless on line predators, just to heighten the concern. So, not only do we have to worry about what other classmates might have taken a look, we also have to be concerned about the extended audience of pedophiles who now know my daughters name and what she looks like...

To say that I am angry is an understatement. I am beyond livid that it would appear there is nothing I can do to control this cyber epidemic.

The Enfield police recommended that I write to my legislature... I'm sure I will... probably more than once. And while I am at it, I will probably shoot off a few "letters to the editor" of our local papers. I will certainly partner with the school and become actively involved in all things "bullying" and encourage my daughter to do the same. I have coached her endlessly to speak out against bullying and harassment and she did just that. She went

to a friend and she came to me immediately thus allowing for the incident to be addressed as quickly as possible. I am so proud of her and together we will work at turning this experience into an opportunity to build strength and character.

In the meantime, I would also like to sound off to whomever else will listen... Maybe there will be someone else out there besides the local police who will "feel my pain." I am asking whoever is reading this , on behalf of my 12 year old daughter and countless others who have found themselves the unwilling recipient of someone else's verbal cyber venom, to shout and scream to everyone they can that cyberspace has got to have some boundaries. Apparently the parents have lost control. The schools have lost control and the authorities are taking ridiculous baby steps at enacting any preventative measures or solutions....

My daughter has been the unwilling recipient to someone's else's hatred. In my day, angry words were written on the bathroom walls. In my daughters world, the hatred reaches as far away as China.

Now what, please tell me, am I supposed to do about that?

With much concern,

Robin Bushong

6 Hoover Lane

Enfield, CT 06082

860-749-0382 (c) 860-798-2068

rbushong@cox.net

Dear Governor Rell,

My objection to withholding the Constitution on the Free Speech Amendment is that when this Amendment was included in our Constitution, there was no such thing as the internet, and the culture of America was not as toxic as it has now become. We cannot hold to a law that is aiding and abetting so much harm. With the reality of the consequences of my young daughter's experience in her school, she is now available for sexual predators or mean and nasty people to cause her potential harm. I, as a conscientious parent will not tolerate this if there is anything I can do. If this should open the door for harm to come to my daughter or anyone's children for that matter, then how could this type of activity still be considered FREE speech. This type of messaging could cause a child to pay a terrible price! Please address this latest nightmare that parents have to deal with. We cannot do it alone. After reading my thoughts on this please suggest to me what I can do. This needs to be viciously addressed. Thank you.